

DAY OF THE BASQUE DIASPORA

Vitoria-Gasteiz, Sept. 8, 2021

The Lehendakari's Speech

Madam President of the Parliament, Mr. General Delegate of Alava, and all those who are here: all the public authorities and representatives of the people, the heads of the Vital and Sancho the Wise Foundations, ladies and gentlemen, good day.

For the fourth year in a row, we have organized the International Day of the Basque Diaspora.

These last two years have been difficult, special; but we are here, we are together, we are united, and we have the desire to create the path of the future together.

We are facing a pandemic all over the world, and our first words are to remember all those who have died and their families. We will always remember them in the Sempervirens Park in Vitoria-Gasteiz.

The Day of the Diaspora has been a longstanding request of the Basque Community living outside the Basque Country itself. We now fulfill that desire and need. We know that this day is important for many Basques.

Today, we emphasize the dual purpose of this Day of the Diaspora:

- On the one hand, to spread the reality and the importance of the Diaspora within the Basque Country itself; and
- On the other, to unite with all the Basque communities throughout the world, taking into account even the smallest.

Little by little, year after year, we are consolidating this idea and this goal. Naturally, it is not in vain that we meet here today, knowing that some fifty initiatives in 14 countries have been organized to celebrate this special Day.

Right here, we have the showing of "Basques in California", and we have heard the music that joins the two sides of the Pyrenees. Here and There, we are one, we are Basques.

A very special greeting this year, our fourth year, from Vitoria-Gasteiz, to all those people who, right now or in another moment, are following this International Day of the Diaspora, be it because of the time difference or for any other reason.

Today, the initiatives we've taken to spread the word of this event are joined by over fifty activities and several initiatives on social media organized in 14 countries.

The Basque Country is proud of its Basque Communities Abroad and of its Basque Centers: an active, open, and dynamic community that today, once again, draws on its imagination to show the world what it's like to be and feel Basque.

In this event, we join past, present, and future.

- The past of our migrant history by showing “Basques in California”
- The present, with a worldwide agenda of activities and the hashtag #EuskoChallenge
- The future, by starting up the HanHemen initiative.

This look answers the great challenge we have set ourselves:

- To recognize and value the migrant history of the Basques;
- To support the various current and future Basque communities; and
- To start weaving a great network of Basques around the world who, with the support of new technologies, contributes value to the presence and reach of the Basque Country.

This commitment, this shared challenge, is moving forward:

- We now have the Archives of the Basque Diaspora, which in just over two years has received donations so that those who want to dig deeper into the History of the Basque presence in the world may do so;
- The University Specialist degree that will soon begin at the University of the Basque Country, offering a unique specialization in Europe that has been warmly received; and
- The HanHemen Initiative, a process to gradually build a great network by sharing ideas, experiences, proposals, needs, etc. in a process of social and digital innovation.

We are sharing this path, Here and There. These have been hard years, both for the Basque Centers and for the Basque community abroad.

Therefore, we share with you our most sincere appreciation for your ability to adapt and handle adversity.

We all agree to one main goal: to continue bringing together Basques from all over the world. We are Basques, near and far, and we spread our People’s values: closeness, commitment, generosity, and solidarity.

You have demonstrated this in the darkest hours of the pandemic. Now, we hope the years to come will bring us the normalcy we dream of. We hope that the Jaialdia, the “Buenos Aires Celebra”, the National Basque Week, and the hundreds and hundreds of other initiatives that are normally organized can again be celebrated.

These activities help sustain the Basque community, wherever they may live. These activities build up the name and essence of the Basque Country, Here and There.

We’re living through tough times, both in the Basque Centers and the Basque communities abroad. Therefore, I share our most sincere recognition of the ability you’ve shown to face up to adversity and help those most in need.

I’m sure that with hard work and the eagerness we renew today, “Here and There, There and Here”, we shall come out on the other side of this pandemic together and stronger. We will again show the world the great network of people we have abroad.

Our recognition for the silent, volunteer, and constant work of these thousands of people. You contribute the best you have to the community, and you contribute to strengthening the image of the Basque Country with culture, cuisine, sport, and the spreading of the Basque language. You are a great asset for our Centers, our Communities, and for our Country.

We are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel. I am sure that together, with the eagerness we renew today, “Here and There, There and Here”, we will come out on the other side of this pandemic as one, stronger.

I am sure that we will show the world, once again, the strength and desire of the Basque network.

Thank you, and may we continue to strengthen the Basque Diaspora and celebrate the Day of the Basque Diaspora!